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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; ANTONINI WILSON; EVO MORALES; 08/29/07

11. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Leading international stories today are related to the FBI finding Antonini Wilson in Miami; the relationships among Argentina, Venezuela and the US; and internal Bolivian politics.

12. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "The FBI finds Wilson in Miami and now expects an arrest order"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarn," writes (08/29) "... The FBI officially notified the Argentine Federal Police that Antonini Wilson was at his home in Key Biscayne..."

"However, an FBI agent in Miami told 'Clarn' that Antonini is an American citizen and that, therefore, he cannot be arrested or prevented from leaving the country, and much less compelled to stay at home unless there is a warrant from an American judge.'

"According to the Extradition Treaty signed between Argentina and the US, Antonini Wilson's capture should be requested via the diplomatic way. Sources from the Argentine Embassy to Washington, DC, told 'Clarn' that the request for Antonini's extradition had not arrived yet. A US diplomat told 'Clarn' referred to a lack of confidence that the Argentine Government would act swiftly..."

"'We suspect it is a money laundering case. It is just like in Menem times with the Juarez Cartel - Mexican drug dealers purchased everything in Argentina to launder drug-trafficking money. Now, the same can be said regarding the Venezuelan mafia's use of petrodollars, which obtains protection because of the bonds purchase.'

"Asked whether they have evidence, the source answered: 'What we know is that there are mechanisms. Many security agencies (CIA, DEA) are dealing with the investigation...'

"In this scenario, Antonini would only be one element of a huge illegal business machinery. The source said he did not believe that the money Antonini was carrying in his suitcase was aimed at funding Cristina's election campaign..."

"The truth is that for the moment no one has real evidence of anything... Antonini's suitcase only seems to be the tip of an iceberg, although no one really knows what is under the water."

- "The Ball is in Bush's Court"

Luis Bruchstein, columnist of left-of-center "Pgina 12," writes (08/29) "Regardless of what Guido Antonini Wilson 'is,' what he has become is more important because his public emergence was the peak of the difficult relations among Argentina, Venezuela and the US..."

The trade relationship between Argentina and Venezuela has been fruitful for the two countries and has increased a lot under the Kirchner administration. There is also agreement on regional issues regarding Mercosur and Latin American integration. Argentina recognizes differences on other issues related to the domestic political process of both countries, but the diversity of relationships is fervently defended. However, the US and some European powers are determined to isolate Chavez. And they generally agree with right-wing opponents from all Mercosur countries... One pivot of this campaign has been Chavez's alleged interference in the domestic policies of his allies and neighbors...

"... Whatever Antonini Wilson is, he has become a piece in US politics and his fate will be related to US interests.

"Whether it was planned or not, the ball (this means Antonini) is in George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice's court. It does not look like a move that could have been planned or much less wanted by the governments of Argentina and Venezuela. Regardless of what US courts may decide, the Venezuelan Government is unlikely to have ordered or advised Antonini Wilson... to take refuge in the US. Rather, it would have found a way to hide him in Venezuela or send him to Saudi Arabia, the end of the world, Iran or Afghanistan... This circumstance reveals that Antonini moved freely and that he did not have so much protection from Venezuela as was taken for granted in most of the stories written."

- "At a dead-end ally"

Pablo Gaggero, international columnist of daily-of-record "La Nacisn," writes (08/29) "In contrast to his Venezuelan friend and ally, President Hugo Chavez, who faces no obstacles to successful obtaining constitutional amendment, Evo Morales finds only difficulties in completing his Constitutional project, which is a vital instrument to imposing his governmental program.

"... Yesterday, the painfully concerned political opposition moved towards the regions or departments, and staged a demonstration unprecedented in the history of Bolivia.

"... Political analyst Cayetano Llobet, from La Paz, opined 'Morales missed an extraordinary opportunity to consolidate a state that was crumbling into pieces and instead he launched a confrontational government with an ethno-centered, Andean, indigenous perspective that disdains the productive sector.'

"The Constituent Assembly, which has been paralyzed for months..., is La Paz's Achilles heel. 'It is a Venezuelan copy and serves the same purpose - the establishment of some sort of lifetime presidency, but it did not work here, we can say it failed.'

"... However, analysts agree that Morales' strength to mobilize has not diminished. Jorge Lazarte, former judge of the National Election Court said 'If elections were held today, Morales would win again, although he should start fearing the increasingly stronger and more creative regional opposition.'

"Economist Gonzalo Chavez defined the situation as a 'catastrophic connection,' which prevents a new social and political pact from putting the social and economic stability on track.

"In this confrontation, Bolivia's alliance with Venezuela and Cuba has started to gain impetus, but is still a secondary factor. Llobet warned 'it is at minimum irritating that the Bolivian president's transportation and safety is in the hands of the Venezuelan military ... Bolivia's domestication (rather than subordination) to Venezuelan military command is unacceptable.'"

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